

HAVE FAITH  
IN  
GOD

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ANDREW MURRAY

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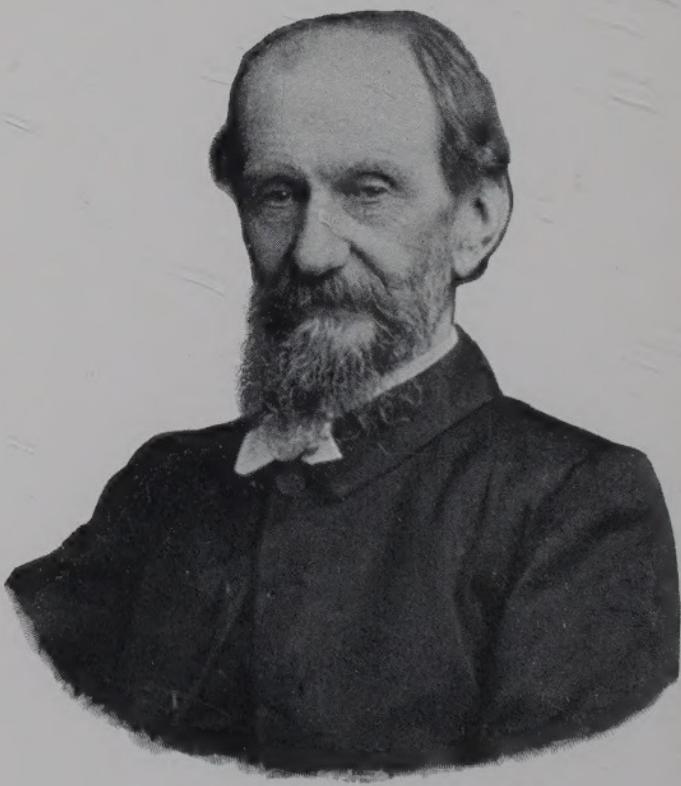
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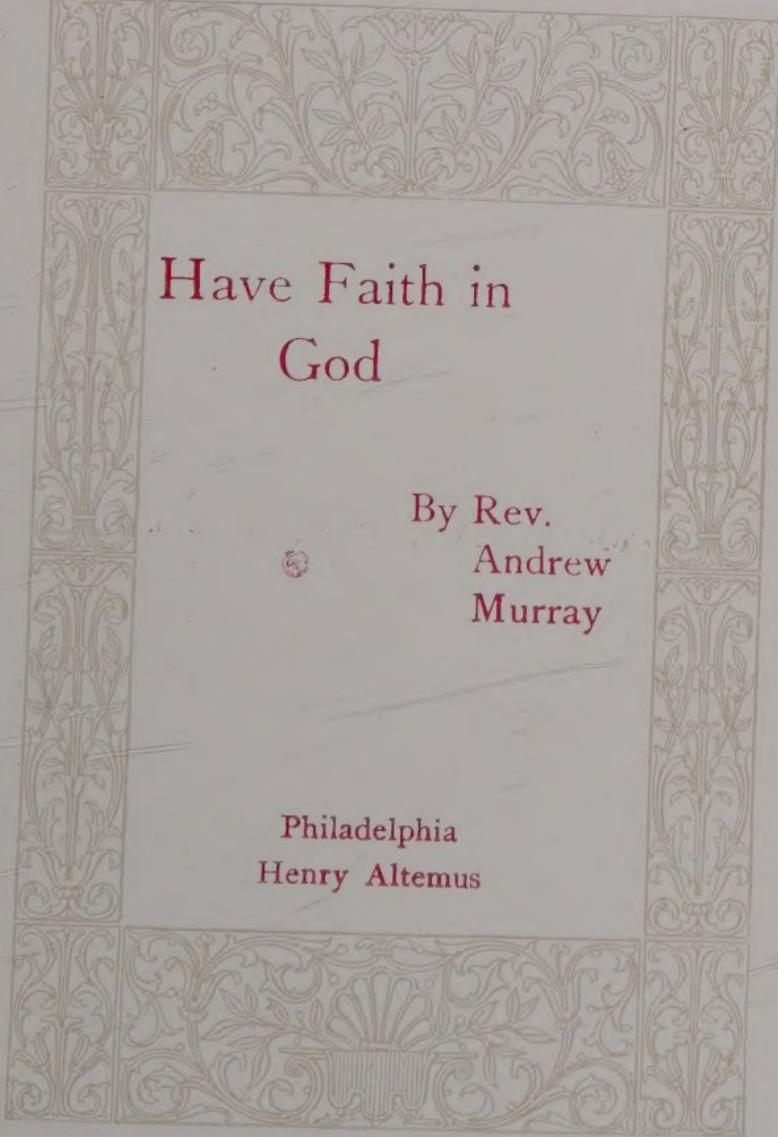
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ANDREW MURRAY



# Have Faith in God

By Rev.  
Andrew  
Murray

Philadelphia  
Henry Altemus

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'HAVE FAITH IN GOD ;'  
OR,  
THE SECRET OF BELIEVING PRAYER.

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'Jesus, answering, said unto them, *Have faith in God*. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what He saith cometh to pass; he shall have it. Therefore I say unto you, All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them.'—MARK xi. 22-24.

THE promise of answer to prayer is one of the most wonderful in all Scripture. In how many hearts it has raised the question: How ever can I attain the faith that knows that it receives all it asks?

It is this question our Lord would answer to-day. Ere He gave that wonderful promise to His disciples, He spoke another word, in which He points out where the faith in the answer to prayer takes its rise, and ever finds its strength. HAVE FAITH IN GOD: this word precedes the other, Have faith in the promise of an answer to prayer. The power to believe *a promise* depends entirely, but only, on faith

*in the promiser.* Trust in the person begets trust in his word. It is only where we live and associate with God in personal, loving intercourse, where GOD HIMSELF is all to us, where our whole being is continually opened up and exposed to the mighty influences that are at work where His Holy Presence is revealed, that the capacity will be developed for believing that He gives whatsoever we ask.

This connection between faith in God and faith in His promise will become clear to us if we think what faith really is. It is often compared to the hand or the mouth, by which we take and appropriate what is offered to us. But it is of importance that we should understand that faith is also the ear by which I hear what is promised, the eye by which I see what is offered me. On this the power to take depends. I must *hear* the person who gives me the promise: the very tone of his voice gives me courage to believe. I must *see* him: in the light of his eye and countenance all fear as to my right to take passes away. The value of the promise depends on the promiser: it is on my knowledge of what the promiser is that faith in the promise depends.

It is for this reason that Jesus, ere He gives that wonderful prayer-promise, first says, 'HAVE FAITH IN GOD.' That is, let thine eye be open to the Living God, and gaze on Him, seeing Him who is Invisible. It is through the eye that I yield myself to the in-

fluence of what is before me; I just allow it to enter, to exert its influence, to leave its impression upon my mind. So believing God is just looking to God and what He is, allowing Him to reveal His presence, giving Him time and yielding the whole being to take in the full impression of what He is as God, the soul opened up to receive and rejoice in the overshadowing of His love. Yes, faith is the eye to which God shows what He is and does: through faith the light of His presence and the workings of His mighty power stream into the soul. As that which I see lives in me, so by faith God lives in me too.

And even so faith is also the ear through which the voice of God is always heard and intercourse with Him kept up. It is through the Holy Spirit the Father speaks to us; the Son is the Word, the substance of what God says; the Spirit is the living voice. This the child of God needs to lead and guide him; the secret voice from heaven must teach him, as it taught Jesus, what to say and what to do. An ear opened towards God, that is, a believing heart waiting on Him, to hear what He says, will hear Him speak. The words of God will not only be the words of a Book, but, proceeding from the mouth of God, they will be spirit and truth, life and power. They will bring in deed and living experience what are otherwise only thoughts. Through this opened ear the soul tarries under the influence of the life and

power of God Himself. As the words I hear enter the mind and dwell and work there, so through faith God enters the heart, and dwells and works there.

When faith now is in full exercise as eye and ear, as the faculty of the soul by which we see and hear God, then it will be able to exercise its full power as hand and mouth, by which we appropriate God and His blessings. The power of reception will depend entirely on the power of spiritual perception. For this reason Jesus said, ere He gave the promise that God would answer believing prayer: ‘ HAVE FAITH IN GOD.’ Faith is simply surrender: I yield myself to the impression the tidings I hear make on me. By faith *I yield myself to the living God.* His glory and love fill my heart, and have the mastery over my life. Faith is fellowship; I give myself up to the influence of the friend who makes me a promise, and become linked to him by it. And it is when we enter into this living fellowship *with God Himself,* in a faith that always sees and hears Him, that it becomes easy and natural to believe His promise as to prayer. Faith in the promise is the fruit of faith in the promiser: the prayer of faith is rooted in the life of faith. And in this way the faith that prays effectually is indeed a gift of God. Not as something that He bestows or infuses at once, but in a far deeper and truer sense, as the blessed disposition or habit of soul which is wrought and grows up in us in a life of

intercourse with Him. Surely for one who knows his Father well, and lives in constant close intercourse with Him, it is a simple thing to believe the promise that He will do the will of His child who lives in union with Himself.

It is because very many of God's children do not understand this connection between the life of faith and the prayer of faith that their experience of the power of prayer is so limited. When they desire earnestly to obtain an answer from God, they fix their whole heart upon the promise, and try their utmost to grasp that promise in faith. When they do not succeed, they are ready to give up hope; the promise is true, but it is beyond their power to take hold of it in faith. Listen to the lesson Jesus teaches us this day: HAVE FAITH IN GOD, the Living God: let faith look to God more than the thing promised: it is His love, His power, His living presence will waken and work the faith. A physician would say, to one asking for some means to get more strength in his arms and hands to seize and hold, that his whole constitution must be built up and strengthened. So the cure of a feeble faith is alone to be found in the invigoration of our whole spiritual life by intercourse with God. Learn to believe in God, to take hold of God, to let God take possession of thy life, and it will be easy to take hold of the promise. He that knows and trusts God finds it easy to trust the promise too.

Just note how distinctly this comes out in the saints of old. Every special exhibition of the power of faith was the fruit of a special revelation of God. See it in Abraham: '*And the word of the Lord came unto Abram, saying, Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield. And He brought him forth abroad, and said . . . AND HE BELIEVED the Lord.*' And later again: '*The Lord appeared unto him and said unto him, I am God Almighty. And Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him,* saying, As for me, behold my covenant is with thee.' It was the revelation of God Himself that gave the promise its living power to enter the heart and work the faith. Because they knew God, these men of faith could not do anything but trust His promise. God's promise will be to us what God Himself is. It is the man who walks before the Lord, and falls upon his face to listen while the living God speaks to him, who will really receive the promise. Though we have God's promises in the Bible, with full liberty to take them, the spiritual power is wanting, except as *God Himself speaks them to us. And He speaks to those who walk and live with Him.* Therefore, HAVE FAITH IN GOD: let faith be all eye and ear, the surrender to let God make His full impression, and reveal Himself fully in the soul. Count it one of the chief blessings of prayer to exercise faith in God, as the Living Mighty God who waits to fulfil in us all the good pleasure of His will,

and the work of faith with power. See in Him the God of Love, whose delight it is to bless and impart Himself. In such worship of faith in God the power will speedily come to believe the promise too: 'ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER YE ASK, BELIEVE THAT YE RECEIVE.' Yes, see that thou dost in faith make God thine own; the promise will be thine too.

Precious lesson that Jesus has to teach us this day. We seek God's gifts: God wants to give us HIMSELF first. We think of prayer as the power to draw down good gifts from heaven; Jesus as the means to draw ourselves up to God. We want to stand at the door and cry; Jesus would have us first enter in and realize that we are friends and children. Let us accept the teaching. Let every experience of the littleness of our faith in prayer urge us first to have and exercise more faith in the living God, and in such faith to yield ourselves to Him. A heart full of God has power for the prayer of faith. Faith in God begets faith in the promise, in the promise too of an answer to prayer.

Therefore, child of God, take time, take time, to bow before *Him*, to wait on *Him* to reveal *Himself*. Take time, and let thy soul in holy awe and worship exercise and express its faith in the Infinite One, and as He imparts Himself and takes possession of thee, the prayer of faith will crown thy faith in God.

'LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

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O my God! I do believe in Thee. I believe in Thee as the Father, Infinite in Thy Love and Power. And as the Son, my Redeemer and my Life. And as the Holy Spirit, Comforter and Guide and Strength. Three-One God, I have faith in Thee. I know and am sure that all that Thou art Thou art to me, that all Thou hast promised Thou wilt perform.

Lord Jesus! increase this faith. Teach me to take time, and wait and worship in the Holy Presence until my faith takes in all there is in my God for me. Let it see Him as the Fountain of all Life, working with Almighty Strength to accomplish His will on the world and in me. Let it see Him in His Love longing to meet and fulfil my desires. Let it so take possession of my heart and life that through faith God alone may dwell there. Lord Jesus, help me! with my whole heart would I believe in God. Let faith in God each moment fill me.

O my Blessed Saviour! how can Thy Church glorify Thee, how can it fulfil that work of intercession through which Thy kingdom must come, unless our whole life be FAITH IN GOD. Blessed Lord! speak Thy Word, 'HAVE FAITH IN GOD,' into the depths of our souls. Amen.

‘PRAYER AND FASTING;’  
OR,  
THE CURE OF UNBELIEF.

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‘Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, *Because of your unbelief*: for verily I say unto you, *If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, nothing shall be impossible to you.* Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by *prayer and fasting.*’—MATT. xvii. 19–21.

WHEN the disciples saw Jesus cast the evil spirit out of the epileptic whom ‘they could not cure,’ they asked the Master for the cause of their failure. He had given them power and authority over all devils, and to cure all diseases. They had often exercised that power, and joyfully told how the devils were subject to them. And yet now, while He was on the Mount, they had utterly failed. That there had been nothing in the will of God or in the nature of the case to render deliverance impossible, had been proved: at Christ’s bidding the evil spirit had gone out. From their expression, ‘Why could we

not?' it is evident that they had wished and sought to do so; they had probably used the Master's name and called upon the evil spirit to go out. Their efforts had been vain, and, in presence of the multitude, they had been put to shame. 'Why could we not?'

Christ's answer was direct and plain: 'Because of your unbelief.' The cause of His success and their failure, was not owing to His having a special power to which they had no access. No; the reason was not far to seek. He had so often taught them that there is one power, that of faith, to which, in the kingdom of darkness, as in the kingdom of God, everything must bow; in the spiritual world failure has but one cause, the want of faith. Faith is the one condition on which all Divine power can enter into man and work through him. It is the susceptibility of the unseen: man's will yielded up to, and moulded by, the will of God. The power they had received to cast out devils, they did not hold in themselves as a permanent gift or possession; the power was in Christ, to be received, and held, and used by faith alone, living faith in Himself. Had they been full of faith *in Him* as Lord and Conqueror in the spirit-world, had they been full of faith *in Him* as having given them authority to cast out in His name, this faith would have given them the victory. 'Because of your unbelief' was, for all time, the Master's

explanation and reproof of impotence and failure in His Church.

But such want of faith must have a cause too. Well might the disciples have asked: 'And why could we not believe? Our faith has cast out devils before this: why have we now failed in believing?' The Master proceeds to tell them ere they ask: 'This kind goeth not out but by fasting and prayer.' As faith is the simplest, so it is the highest exercise of the spiritual life, where our spirit yields itself in perfect receptivity to God's Spirit, and so is strengthened to its highest activity. This faith depends entirely upon the state of the spiritual life; only when this is strong and in full health, when the Spirit of God has full sway in our life, is there the power of faith to do its mighty deeds. And therefore Jesus adds: 'Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by fasting and prayer.' The faith that can overcome such stubborn resistance as you have just seen in this evil spirit, Jesus tells them, is not possible except to men living in very close fellowship with God, and in very special separation from the world—in prayer and fasting. And so He teaches us two lessons in regard to prayer of deep importance. The one, that faith needs a life of prayer in which to grow and keep strong. The other, that prayer needs fasting for its full and perfect development.

Faith needs a life of prayer for its full growth. In

all the different parts of the spiritual life, there is such union, such unceasing action and re-action, that each may be both cause and effect. Thus it is with faith. There can be no true prayer without faith; some measure of faith must precede prayer. And yet prayer is also the way to more faith; there can be no higher degrees of faith except through much prayer. This is the lesson Jesus teaches here. There is nothing needs so much to grow as our faith. 'Your faith groweth exceedingly,' is said of one Church. When Jesus spoke the words, 'According to your faith be it unto you,' He announced the law of the kingdom, which tells us that all have not equal degrees of faith, that the same person has not always the same degree, and that the measure of faith must always determine the measure of power and of blessing. If we want to know where and how our faith is to grow, the Master points us to the throne of God. It is in prayer, in the exercise of the faith I have in fellowship with the living God, that faith can increase. Faith can only live by feeding on what is Divine, on God Himself.

It is in the adoring worship of God, the waiting on Him and for Him, the deep silence of soul that yields itself for God to reveal Himself, that the capacity for knowing and trusting God will be developed. It is as we take His word from the Blessed Book, and bring it to Himself, asking Him to speak

it to us with His living loving voice, that the power will come fully to believe and receive the word as God's own word to us. It is in prayer, in living contact with God in living faith, that faith, the power to trust God, and in that trust, to accept everything He says, to accept every possibility He has offered to our faith, will become strong in us. Many Christians cannot understand what is meant by the much prayer they sometimes hear spoken of: they can form no conception, nor do they feel the need, of spending hours with God. But what the Master says, the experience of His people has confirmed: men of strong faith are men of much prayer.

This just brings us back again to the lesson we learned when Jesus, before telling us to believe that we receive what we ask, first said, 'Have faith in God.' It is God, the living God, into whom our faith must strike its roots deep and broad; then it will be strong to remove mountains and cast out devils. 'If ye have faith, nothing shall be impossible to you.' Oh! if we do but give ourselves up to the work God has for us in the world, coming into contact with the mountains and the devils there are to be cast away and cast out, we should soon comprehend the need there is of much faith, and of much prayer, as the soil in which alone faith can be cultivated. Christ Jesus is our life, the life of our faith too. It is His life in us that makes us strong, and

makes us simple to believe. It is in the dying to self which much prayer implies, in closer union to Jesus, that the spirit of faith will come in power. *Faith needs prayer* for its full growth.

And *prayer needs fasting* for its full growth: this is the second lesson. Prayer is the one hand with which we grasp the invisible; fasting, the other, with which we let loose and cast away the visible. In nothing is man more closely connected with the world of sense than in his need of food, and his enjoyment of it. It was the fruit, good for food, with which man was tempted and fell in Paradise. It was with bread to be made of stones that Jesus, when an hungered, was tempted in the wilderness, and in fasting that He triumphed. The body has been redeemed to be a temple of the Holy Spirit; it is in body as well as spirit, it is very specially, Scripture says, in eating and drinking, we are to glorify God. It is to be feared that there are many Christians to whom this eating to the glory of God has not yet become a spiritual reality. And the first thought suggested by Jesus' words in regard to fasting and prayer, is that it is only in a life of moderation and temperance and self-denial that there will be the heart or the strength to pray much.

But then there is also its more literal meaning. Sorrow and anxiety cannot eat: joy celebrates its feasts with eating and drinking. There may come

times of intense desire, when it is strongly felt how the body, with its appetites, lawful though they be, still hinder the spirit in its battle with the powers of darkness, and the need is felt of keeping it under. We are creatures of the senses: our mind is helped by what comes to us embodied in concrete form; fasting helps to express, to deepen, and to confirm the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything, to sacrifice ourselves, to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God. And He who accepted the fasting and sacrifice of the Son, knows to value and accept and reward with spiritual power the soul that is thus ready to give up all for Christ and His kingdom.

And then follows a still wider application. Prayer is the reaching out after God and the unseen; fasting, the letting go of all that is of the seen and temporal. While ordinary Christians imagine that all that is not positively forbidden and sinful is lawful to them, and seek to retain as much as possible of this world, with its property, its literature, its enjoyments, the truly consecrated soul is as the soldier who carries only what he needs for the warfare. Laying aside every weight, as well as the easily besetting sin, afraid of entangling himself with the affairs of this life, he seeks to lead a Nazarite life, as one specially set apart for the Lord and His service. Without such voluntary separation, even from what is lawful, no one will

attain power in prayer: this kind goeth not out but by fasting and prayer.

Disciples of Jesus! who have asked the Master to teach you to pray, come now and accept His lessons. He tells you that prayer is the path to faith, strong faith, that can cast out devils. He tells you: 'If ye have faith, nothing shall be impossible to you;' let this glorious promise encourage you to pray much. Is the prize not worth the price? Shall we not give up all to follow Jesus in the path He opens to us here; shall we not, if need be, fast? Shall we not do anything that neither the body nor the world around hinder us in our great life-work,—having intercourse with our God in prayer, that we may become men of faith, whom He can use in His work of saving the world.

'LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

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O Lord Jesus! how continually Thou hast to reprove us for our unbelief! How strange it must appear to Thee, this terrible incapacity of trusting our Father and His promises. Lord! let Thy reproof, with its searching 'Because of your unbelief,' sink into the very depths of our hearts, and reveal to us how much of the sin and suffering around us is our blame. And then teach us, Blessed Lord, that there is a place where faith can be learned and gained,—

even in the prayer and fasting that brings into living and abiding fellowship with Thyself and the Father.

O Saviour! Thou Thyself art the Author and the Perfecter of our faith; teach us what it is to let Thee live in us by Thy Holy Spirit. Lord! our efforts and prayers for grace to believe have been so unavailing. We know why it was: we sought for strength in ourselves to be given from Thee. Holy Jesus! do at length teach us the mystery of Thy life in us, and how Thou, by Thy Spirit, dost undertake to live in us the life of faith, to see to it that our faith shall not fail. O let us see that our faith will just be a part of that wonderful prayer-life which Thou givest in them who expect their training for the ministry of intercession, not in word and thought only, but in the Holy Unction Thou givest. the inflowing of the Spirit of Thine own life. And teach us how, in fasting and prayer, we may grow up to the faith to which nothing shall be impossible. Amen.

'And whensoever ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any one; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.'—MARK xi. 25.

'WHEN YE STAND PRAYING, FORGIVE;'  
OR,  
PRAYER AND LOVE.

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THESE words follow immediately on the great prayer-promise, 'All things whatsoever ye pray, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them.' We have already seen how the words that preceded that promise, 'have faith in God,' taught us that in prayer all depends upon our relation to God being clear; these words that follow on it remind us that our relation with fellow-men must be clear too. Love to God and love to our neighbor are inseparable: the prayer from a heart, that is either not right with God on the one side, or with men on the other, cannot prevail. Faith and love are essential to each other.

We find that this is a thought to which our Lord frequently gave expression. In the Sermon on the

Mount (*Matt. v. 23, 24*), when speaking of the sixth commandment, He taught His disciples how impossible acceptable worship to the Father was if everything were not right with the brother: ‘If thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.’ And so later, when speaking of prayer to God, after having taught us to pray, ‘Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors,’ He added at the close of the prayer: ‘If you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.’ At the close of the parable of the unmerciful servant He applies His teaching in the words: ‘So shall also my Heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts.’ And so here, beside the dried-up fig-tree, where He speaks of the wonderful power of faith and the prayer of faith, He all at once, apparently without connection, introduces the thought, ‘Whosoever ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any one; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.’ It is as if the Lord had learned during His life at Nazareth and afterwards that disobedience to the law of love to men was the great sin even of praying people, and the great cause of the feebleness of their prayer.

And it is as if He wanted to lead us into His own blessed experience that nothing gives such liberty of access and such power in believing as the consciousness that we have given ourselves in love and compassion for those whom God loves.

The first lesson taught here is that of a forgiving disposition. We pray, ‘Forgive, *even as* we have forgiven.’ Scripture says, ‘Forgive one another, even as God also in Christ forgave you.’ God’s full and free forgiveness is to be the rule of ours with men. Otherwise our reluctant, half hearted forgiveness, which is not forgiveness at all, will be God’s rule with us. Every prayer rests upon our faith in God’s pardoning grace. If God dealt with us after our sins, not one prayer could be heard. Pardon opens the door to all God’s love and blessing: because God has pardoned all our sin, our prayer can prevail to obtain all we need. The deep sure ground of answer to prayer is God’s forgiving love. When it has taken possession of the heart, we pray in faith. But also, when it has taken possession of the heart, we live in love. God’s forgiving disposition, revealed in His love to us, becomes a disposition in us; as the power of His forgiving love shed abroad and dwelling within us, we forgive even as He forgives. If there be great and grievous injury or injustice done us, we seek first of all to possess a Godlike disposition; to be kept from a sense of wounded honor, from a desire

to maintain our rights, or from rewarding the offender as he has deserved. In the little annoyances of daily life, we are watchful not to excuse the hasty temper, the sharp word, the quick judgment, with the thought that we mean no harm, that we do not keep the anger long, or that it would be too much to expect from feeble human nature, that we should really forgive the way God and Christ do. No, we take the command literally, '*Even as Christ forgave, so also do ye.*' The blood that cleanses the conscience from dead works, cleanses from selfishness too; the love it reveals is pardoning love, that takes possession of us and flows through us to others. Our forgiving love to men is the evidence of the reality of God's forgiving love in us, and so the condition of the prayer of faith.

There is a second, more general lesson: our daily life in the world is made the rest of our intercourse with God in prayer. How often the Christian, when he comes to pray, does his utmost to cultivate certain frames of mind which he thinks will be pleasing. He does not understand, or forgets, that life does not consist of so many loose pieces, of which now the one, then the other, can be taken up. Life is a whole, and the pious frame of the hour of prayer is judged of by God from the ordinary frame of the daily life of which the hour of prayer is but a small part. Not the feeling I call up, but the tone of my life during

the day, is God's criterion of what I really am and desire. My drawing nigh to God is of one piece with my intercourse with men and earth: failure here will cause failure there. And that not only when there is the distinct consciousness of anything wrong between my neighbor and myself; but the ordinary current of my thinking and judging, the unloving thoughts and words I allow to pass unnoticed, can hinder my prayer. The effectual prayer of faith comes out from a life given up to the will and the love of God. Not according to what I try to be when praying, but when I am not praying, is my prayer dealt with by God.

We may gather these thoughts into a third lesson: In our life with men the one thing on which everything depends is love. The spirit of forgiveness is the spirit of love. Because God is love, He forgives: it is only when we are dwelling in love that we can forgive as God forgives. In love to the brethren we have the evidence of love to the Father, the ground of confidence before God, and the assurance that our prayer will be heard (*1 John iv. 20, iii. 18-21, 23.*) 'Let us love in deed and truth; hereby shall we assure our heart before Him. If our heart condemn us not, we have boldness toward God, and whatever we ask, we receive of Him.' Neither faith nor work will profit if we have not love; it is love that unites with God, it is love that proves the reality of faith.

As essential as in the word that precedes the great prayer-promise in *Mark xi. 24*, 'Have faith in God,' is this one that follows it, 'Have love to men.' The right relations to the living God above me, and the living men around me, are the conditions of effectual prayer.

This love is of special consequence when we labour for such and pray for them. We sometimes give ourselves to work for Christ, from zeal for His cause, as we call it, or for our own spiritual health, without giving ourselves in personal self-sacrificing love for those whose souls we seek. No wonder that our faith is feeble and does not conquer. To look on each wretched one, however unlovable he be, in the light of the tender love of Jesus the Shepherd seeking the lost; to see Jesus Christ in him, and to take him up, for Jesus' sake, in a heart that really loves,—this, this is the secret of believing prayer and successful effort. Jesus, in speaking of forgiveness, speaks of love as its root. Just as in the Sermon on the Mount He connected His teaching and promises about prayer with the call to be merciful, as the Father in heaven is merciful (*Matt. v. 7, 8, 22, 38-48*), so we see it here: a loving life is the condition of believing prayer.

It has been said: There is nothing so heart-searching as believing prayer, or even the honest effort to pray in faith. O let us not turn the edge of that

self-examination by the thought that God does not hear our prayer for reasons known to Himself alone. By no means. ‘Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss.’ Let that word of God search us. Let us ask whether our prayer be indeed the expression of a life wholly given over to the will of God and the love of man. Love is the only soil in which faith can strike its roots and thrive. As it throws its arms up, and opens its heart heavenward, the Father always looks to see if it has them opened towards the evil and the unworthy too. In that love, not indeed the love of perfect attainment, but the love of fixed purpose and sincere obedience, faith can alone obtain the blessing. It is he who gives himself to let the love of God dwell in him, and in the practice of daily life to love as God loves, who will have the power to believe in the Love that hears his every prayer. It is *the Lamb*, who is in the midst of the throne: it is suffering and forbearing love that prevails with God in prayer. The merciful shall obtain mercy; the meek shall inherit the earth.

‘LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.’

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Blessed Father! Thou art Love, and only he that abideth in love abideth in Thee and in fellowship with Thee. The Blessed Son hath this day again taught me how deeply true this is of my fellowship

with Thee in prayer. O my God! let Thy love, shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Spirit, be in me a fountain of love to all around me, that out of a life in love may spring the power of believing prayer. O my Father! grant by the Holy Spirit that this may be my experience, that a life in love to all around me is the gate to a life in the love of my God. And give me especially to find in the joy with which I forgive day by day whoever might offend me, the proof that Thy forgiveness to me is a power and a life.

Lord Jesus! my Blessed Teacher! teach Thou me to forgive and to love. Let the power of Thy blood make the pardon of my sins such a reality, that forgiveness, as shown by Thee to me, and by me to others, may be the very joy of heaven. Show me whatever in my intercourse with fellow-men might hinder my fellowship with God, so that my daily life in my own home and in society may be the school in which strength and confidence are gathered for the prayer of faith. Amen.

‘IF TWO AGREE;’  
OR,  
THE POWER OF UNITED PRAYER.

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‘Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, *it shall be done* for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them.’—MATT. xviii. 19, 20.

ONE of the first lessons of our Lord in His school of prayer was: Not to be seen of men. Enter thy inner chamber; be alone with the Father. When He has thus taught us that the meaning of prayer is personal individual contact with God, He comes with a second lesson: You have need not only of secret solitary, but also of public united prayer. And He gives us a very special promise for the united prayer of two or three who agree in what they ask. As a tree has its root hidden in the ground and its stem growing up into the sunlight, so prayer needs equally for its full development the hidden secrecy in which the soul meets God alone, and the public fellowship

with those who find in the name of Jesus their common meeting-place.

The reason why this must be so is plain. The bond that unites a man to his fellow-men is no less real and close than that which unites him to God: he is one with them. Grace renews not alone our relation to God but to man too. We not only learn to say 'My Father,' but 'Our Father.' Nothing would be more unnatural than that the children of a family should always meet their father separately, but never in the united expression of their desires or their love. Believers are not only members of one family, but even of one body. Just as each member of the body depends on the other, and the full action of the spirit dwelling in the body depends on the union and co-operation of all, so Christians cannot reach the full blessing God is ready to bestow through His Spirit, but as they seek and receive it in fellowship with each other. It is in the union and fellowship of believers that the Spirit can manifest its full power. It was to the hundred and twenty continuing in one place together, and praying with one accord, that the Spirit came from the throne of the glorified Lord.

The marks of true united prayer are given us in these words of our Lord. The first is *agreement* as to the thing asked. There must not only be generally the consent to agree with anything another may ask:

there must be some special thing, matter of distinct united desire; the agreement must be, as all prayer, in spirit and in truth. In such agreement it will become very clear to us what exactly we are asking, whether we may confidently ask according to God's will, and whether we are ready to believe that we have received what we ask.

The second mark is the gathering in, or into, the Name of Jesus. We shall afterwards have much more to learn of the need and the power of the Name of Jesus in prayer; here our Lord teaches us that the Name must be the centre of union to which believers gather, the bond of union that makes them one, just as a home contains and unites all who are in it. 'The Name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and escape.' That Name is such a reality to those who understand and believe it, that to meet within it is to have Himself present. The love and unity of His disciples have to Jesus infinite attraction: 'Where two or three are gathered in my Name, *there am I in the midst of them.*' It is the living presence of Jesus, in the fellowship of His loving praying disciples, that gives united prayer its power.

The third mark is, the sure answer: 'It shall be done for them of my Father.' A prayer-meeting for maintaining religious fellowship, or seeking our own edification, may have its use; this was not the Sa-

viour's view in its appointment. He meant it as a means of securing *special answer to prayer*. A prayer meeting without recognized answer to prayer ought to be an anomaly. When any one of us have distinct desires in regard to which we feel too weak to exercise the needful faith, we ought to seek strength in the help of others. In the unity of faith and of love and of the Spirit, the power of the Name and the Presence of Jesus acts more freely and the answer comes more surely. The mark that there has been true united prayer is the fruit, the answer, the receiving of the thing we have asked: '*I say unto you, It shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.*'

What an unspeakable privilege this of united prayer is, and what a power it might be. If the believing husband and wife knew that they were joined together in the Name of Jesus to experience His presence and power in united prayer (*1 Peter*); if friends believed what mighty help two or three praying in concert could give each other; if in every prayer meeting the coming together in the Name, the faith in the Presence, and the expectation of the answer, stood in the foreground; if in every Church united effectual prayer were regarded as one of the chief purposes for which they are banded together, the highest exercise of their power as a Church; if in the Church universal the coming of the kingdom, the coming of

the King Himself, first in the mighty outpouring of His Holy Spirit, then in His own glorious person, were really matter of unceasing united crying to God;—O who can say what blessing might come to, and through, those who thus agreed to prove God in the fulfilment of His promise.

In the Apostle Paul we see very distinctly what a reality his faith in the power of united prayer was. To the Romans he writes (*xv. 30*): ‘I beseech you, brethren, by the love of the Spirit, that ye *strive together with me* in your prayer to God for me.’ He expects in answer to be delivered from his enemies, and to be prospered in his work. To the Corinthians (*2 Cor. i. 11*), ‘God will still deliver us, ye also helping together on our behalf by your supplications;’ their prayer is to have a real share in his deliverance. To the Ephesians he writes: ‘With all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit for all the saints and on my behalf, that utterance may be given unto me.’ His power and success in his ministry he makes to depend on their prayers. With the Philippians (*i. 19*) he expects that his trials will turn to his salvation and the progress of the gospel ‘*through your supplications and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.*’ To the Colossians (*iv. 3*) he adds to the injunction to continue steadfast in prayer: ‘Withal praying for us too, that God may open unto us a door for the word.’ And to the

Thessalonians (*2 Thess. iii. 1*) he writes: 'Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run and be glorified, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable men.' It is everywhere evident that Paul felt himself the member of a body, on the sympathy and co-operation of which he was dependent, and that he counted on the prayers of the Churches to gain for him, what otherwise might not be given. The prayers of the Church were to him as real a factor in the work of the kingdom, as the power of God.

Who can say what power a Church could develop and exercise, if it gave itself to the work of prayer day and night for the coming of the kingdom, for God's power on His servants and His word, for the glorifying of God in the salvation of souls? Most Churches think their members are gathered into one simply to take care of and build up each other. They know not that God rules the world by the prayers of His saints; that prayer is the power by which Satan is conquered; that by prayer the Church on earth has disposal of the powers of the heavenly world. They do not remember that Jesus has, by His promise, consecrated every assembly in His Name to be a gate of heaven, where His presence is to be felt, and His Power experienced in the Father fulfilling their desires.

We cannot sufficiently thank God for the blessed

week of united prayer, with which Christendom in our days opens every year. As proof of our unity and our faith in the power of united prayer, as a training-school for the enlargement of our hearts to take in all the needs of the Church universal, as a help to united persevering prayer, it is of unspeakable value. But very specially as a stimulus to continued union in prayer in the smaller circles, its blessing has been great. And it will become even greater, as God's people recognize what it is, all to meet as one in the Name of Jesus, to have His presence in the midst of a body all united in the Holy Spirit, and boldly to claim the promise that it shall be done of the Father what they agree to ask.

‘LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.’

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Blessed Lord! who didst in Thy high-priestly prayer ask so earnestly for the unity of Thy people, teach us how Thou dost invite and urge us to this unity by Thy precious promise given to united prayer. It is when we are one in love and desire that our faith has Thy presence and the Father’s answer.

O Father! we pray for Thy people, and for every smaller circle of those who meet together, that they may be one. Remove, we pray, all selfishness and self-interest, all narrowness of heart and estrangement by

which that unity is hindered. Cast out the spirit of the world and the flesh, through which Thy promise loses all its power. O let the thought of Thy presence and the Father's favor draw us all nearer to each other.

Grant especially, Blessed Lord, that Thy Church may believe that it is by the power of united prayer that she can bind and loose in heaven; that Satan can be cast out; that souls can be saved; that mountains can be removed; that the kingdom can be hastened. And grant, good Lord! that in the circle with which I pray, the prayer of the Church may indeed be the power through which Thy Name and Word are glorified. Amen.

'SPEEDILY, THOUGH BEARING LONG,'  
OR,  
THE POWER OF PERSEVERING PRAYER.

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'And He spake a parable unto them to the end that they ought always to pray, and not to faint. . . . And the Lord said, Hear what the unrighteous judge saith. And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry to Him day and night, and He is long-suffering over them? I say unto you, that He will avenge them speedily.'—LUKE xviii.  
1-8.

OF all the mysteries of the prayer world, the need of persevering prayer is one of the greatest. That the Lord, who is so loving and longing to bless, should have to be supplicated time after time, sometimes year after year, before the answer comes, we cannot easily understand. It is also one of the greatest practical difficulties in the exercise of believing prayer. When, after persevering supplication, our prayer remains unanswered, it is often easiest for our slothful flesh, and it has all the appearance of pious submission, to think that we must now cease pray-

ing, because God may have His secret reason for withholding His answer to our request.

It is by faith alone that the difficulty is overcome. When once faith has taken its stand upon God's word, and the Name of Jesus, and has yielded itself to the leading of the Spirit to seek God's will and honour alone in its prayer, it need not be discouraged by delay. It knows from Scripture that the power of believing prayer is simply irresistible; real faith can never be disappointed. It knows how, just as water, to exercise the irresistible power it can have, must be gathered up and accumulated, until the stream can come down in full force, there must often be a heaping up of prayer, until God sees that the measure is full, and the answer comes. It knows how, just as the ploughman has to take his ten thousand steps, and sow his ten thousand seeds, each one a part of the preparation for the final harvest, so there is a need-be for oft-repeated persevering prayer, all working out some desired blessing. It knows for certain that not a single believing prayer can fail of its effect in heaven, but has its influence, and is treasured up to work out an answer in due time to him who persevereth to the end. It knows that it has to do not with human thoughts or possibilities, but with the word of the living God. And so, even as Abraham through so many years 'in hope believed against hope,' and then 'through faith and

*patience* inherited the promise,' it accounts that the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation, *waiting* and *hasting* unto the coming of its Lord to fulfil His promise.

To enable us, when the answer to our prayer does not come at once, to combine quiet patience and joyful confidence in our persevering prayer, we must specially try to understand the two words in which our Lord sets forth the character and conduct, not of the unjust judge, but of our God and Father, towards those whom He allows to cry day and night to Him: 'He is *long-suffering* over them; He will avenge them *speedily*.'

He will avenge them *speedily*, the Master says. The blessing is all prepared; He is not only willing but most anxious to give them what they ask; everlasting love burns with the longing desire to reveal itself fully to its beloved, and to satisfy their needs. God will not delay one moment longer than is absolutely necessary; He will do all in His power to hasten and speed the answer.

But why, if this be true and His power be definite, does it often last so long with the answer to prayer? And why must God's own elect so often, in the midst of suffering and conflict, cry day and night? 'He is *long-suffering* over them.' 'Behold! the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, being *long-suffering* over it, till it receive the early and the

latter rain.' The husbandman does indeed long for his harvest, but knows that it must have its full time of sunshine and rain, and has long patience. A child so often wants to pick the half-ripe fruit; the husbandman knows to wait till the proper time. Man, in his spiritual nature too, is under the law of gradual growth that reigns in all created life. It is only in the path of development that he can reach his divine destiny. And it is the Father, in whose hands are the times and seasons, who alone knows the moment when the soul or the Church is ripened to that fulness of faith in which it can really take and keep the blessing. As a father who longs to have his only child home from school, and yet waits patiently till the time of training is completed, so it is with God and His children: He is the long-suffering One, and answers speedily.

The insight into this truth leads the believer to cultivate the corresponding dispositions: *patience* and *faith*, *waiting* and *hasting*, are the secret of his perseverance. By faith in the promise of God, we know that we *have* the petitions we have asked of Him. Faith takes and holds the answer in the promise, as an unseen spiritual possession, rejoices in it, and praises for it. But there is a difference between the faith that thus holds the word and knows that it has the answer, and the clearer, fuller, riper faith that obtains the promise as a present experience.

It is in persevering, not unbelieving, but confident and praising prayer, that the soul grows up into that full union with its Lord in which it can enter upon the possession of the blessing in Him. There may be in these around us, there may be in that great system of being of which we are part, there may be in God's government, things that have to be put right through our prayer, ere the answer can fully come: the faith that has, according to the command, believed that it has received, can allow God to take His time; it knows it has prevailed and must prevail. In quiet, persistent, and determined perseverance it continues in prayer and thanksgiving until the blessing comes. And so we see combined what at first sight appears so contradictory; the faith that rejoices in the answer of the unseen God as a present possession, with the patience that cries day and night until it be revealed. The *speedily* of God's *long-suffering* is met by the triumphant but patient faith of His waiting child.

Our great danger in this school of the answer delayed, is the temptation of thinking that, after all, it may not be God's will to give us what we ask. If our prayer be according to God's word, and under the leading of the Spirit, let us not give way to these fears. Let us learn to give God time. God needs time with us. If we only give Him time, that is, time in the daily fellowship with Himself, for Him

to exercise the full influence of His presence on us, and time, day by day, in the course of our being kept waiting, for faith to prove its reality and to fill our whole being, He Himself will lead us from faith to vision; we shall see the glory of God. Let no delay shake our faith. Of faith it holds good: first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. Each believing prayer brings a step nearer the final victory. Each believing prayer helps to ripen the fruit and bring us nearer to it; it fills up the measure of prayer and faith known to God alone; it conquers the hindrances in the unseen world; it hastens the end. Child of God! give the Father time. He is long-suffering over you. He wants the blessing to be rich, and full, and sure; give Him time, while you cry day and night. Only remember the word: 'I say unto you, He will avenge them speedily.'

The blessing of such persevering prayer is unspeakable. There is nothing so heart-searching as the prayer of faith. It teaches you to discover and confess, and give up everything that hinders the coming of the blessing; everything there may be not in accordance with the Father's will. It leads to closer fellowship with Him who alone can teach to pray, to a more entire surrender to draw nigh under no covering but that of the blood, and the Spirit. It calls to a closer and more simple abiding in Christ alone.

Christian! give God time. He will perfect that which concerneth you. ‘Long-suffering—speedily,’ this is God’s watchword as you enter the gates of prayer: be it yours too.

Let it be thus whether you pray for yourself, or for others. All labour, bodily and mental, needs time and effort: we must give up *ourselves* to it. Nature discovers her secrets and yields her treasures only to diligent and thoughtful labour. However little we can understand it, in the spiritual husbandry it is the same: the seed we sow in the soil of heaven, the efforts we put forth, and the influence we seek to exert in the world above, need our whole being: we must *give ourselves* to prayer. But let us hold fast the great confidence, that in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

And let us specially learn the lesson as we pray for the Church of Christ. She is indeed as the poor widow, in the absence of her Lord, apparently at the mercy of her adversary, helpless to obtain redress. Let us, when we pray for His Church or any portion of it, under the power of the world, asking Him to visit her with the mighty workings of His Spirit and to prepare her for His coming, let us pray in the assured faith: prayer does help, praying always and not fainting will bring the answer. Only give God time. And then keep crying day and night. ‘Hear what the righteous judge saith. And shall not God

avenge His own elect, which cry to Him day and night, and *He is long-suffering* over them. I say unto you, *He will avenge them speedily.*'

'LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

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O Lord my God! teach me now to know Thy way, and in faith to apprehend what Thy Beloved Son has taught: 'He will avenge them speedily.' Let Thy tender love, and the delight Thou hast in hearing and blessing Thy children, lead me implicitly to accept Thy promise, that we receive what we believe, that we have the petitions we ask, and that the answer will in due time be seen. Lord! we understand the seasons in nature, and know to wait with patience for the fruit we long for—O fill us with the assurance that not one moment longer than is needed wilt Thou delay, and that faith will hasten the answer.

Blessed Master! Thou hast said that it is a sign of God's elect that they cry day and night. O teach us to understand this. Thou knowest how speedily we grow faint and weary. It is as if the Divine Majesty is so much beyond the need or the reach of continued supplication, that it does not become us to be too importunate. O Lord! do teach me how real the labour of prayer is. I know how here on earth, when I have failed in an undertaking, I can often succeed

by renewed and more continuing effort, by giving more time and thought: show me how, by giving myself more entirely to prayer, to live in prayer, I shall obtain what I ask. And above all, O my blessed Teacher! Author and Perfecter of faith, let by Thy grace my whole life be one of faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me—in whom my prayer gains acceptance, in whom I have the assurance of the answer, in whom the answer will be mine. Lord Jesus! in this faith I will pray always and not faint. Amen.



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